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Homeless count

Further analysis needed to
determine true numbers.
Page 3

Club gets new home

Niagara Canoe Club moves
to flatwater centre.
Page 6

INPORT NEWS



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UPFRONT

Niagarans to have say on Lyme disease framework

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

As work is done to develop a national framework for Lyme disease, Niagara will have a voice — or two — at the table.

Niagara Region associate medical officer of health Dr. Mustafa Hirji and manager of vector-borne diseases Peter Jekel are headed to Ottawa last Sunday to offer input on the illness at a Public Health Agency of Canada conference.

Over the three-day event, recommendations to help shape the framework were constructed by stakeholders from across the country.

A private member's bill was passed last year to see the framework constructed to address the growing issue of Lyme disease in Canada.

Last Sunday evening included a public forum where people diagnosed with Lyme disease shared their thoughts and experiences. The following two days included expert presentations and discussion sessions.

"It will be a good experience to hear perspectives across the country on how others are addressing the Lyme disease issue," Hirji said.

"I think it will be a chance to hear from experts on what is the latest and most current thinking that perhaps should influence some of the guide-

lines and practices that are out there."

He intended to highlight what happens at the local level in terms of preventing Lyme disease, because "that's the key role we have in public health."

"I'd also like to contribute some of the ideas I think our clinicians and members of the public experience," he said, adding he also plans to bring to light a recent resolution passed by regional council.

Last month, council called on upper levels of government to invest more money to enhance research for testing of Lyme disease and to enhance treatment options for people suffering from the condition.

Since 2005, 53 Lyme disease infections have been reported in Niagara. More infections have been reported year over year.

There are two places in the region with established blacklegged tick populations — Wainfleet Bog and the area around Mud Lake.

Public health actively participates in tick dragging high-risk areas, as well as in parks and other areas where people tend to spend time outdoors, to determine whether blacklegged ticks — the type that carry the Lyme disease bacteria — are present.

Of the 1,530 ticks collected by public health in 2015, 220 were blacklegged ticks.

Those ticks were sent for



A sign warns hikers to be wary of ticks at Mud Lake Conservation area in Port Colborne.

MICHELLE ALLENBERG/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

testing at the National Microbiology Laboratory, where 17.5 per cent tested positive as carriers of the Lyme disease bacteria.

Public health works closely with its municipal partners

and Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority to educate the public on preventing tick bites and Lyme disease, Niagara Region environmental health director Bjorn Christensen said.

Signs are posted in high-risk areas, he said, and ongoing dialogues take place with outdoor activity groups to ensure they're aware of personal protective measures they can take to prevent contact.

SECOND ANNUAL LYME WALK NIAGARA

When: Saturday, June 4, Registration at 9:30 a.m., followed by the opening ceremony at 10 and walk at 10:30.

Where: Welland International Flatwater Centre

Food and drinks will be available for purchase on site from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., and a free workshop will be hosted by Dr. Marvin Sponagle from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Sponagle, of the Sponagle Lyme Institute, will discuss Lyme disease, modality and vitamins, among other topics.

All proceeds from the day will benefit the G. Magnotta Research for Vector-Borne Diseases.

For more information, visit the Lyme Walk Niagara Facebook page.

While the federal government has not yet indicated a timeline for the framework to be completed, Hirji is hopeful it will be ready before the end of 2016.

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LOCAL NEWS

Homeless data being analyzed

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

It will take time before a deeper dig can be done to analyze results of Niagara's first count.

Preliminary numbers were presented in a report at last Tuesday's regional public health and social services committee meeting, but it will likely be weeks before a true picture of Niagara's homeless population is revealed.

The local count took place April 5 in 13 shelters and on the streets of 11 municipalities, excluding Niagara-on-the-Lake, which was not included in the count.

In total, 30 municipalities across Canada participated in the federally funded exercise.

The one-day count saw 424 individuals in Niagara identified in transitional housing and emergency shelters, and 140 individuals identified on local streets.

Of the 140 people on the streets, only four participated in the survey. The sheltered count yielded more positive results, with 285 people participating.

The street count requires further analysis, as it has not yet been determined how many of the 140 individuals meet the federal definition of absolute homelessness.

"Some individuals when they were approached, they were not interested in speaking to our volunteers," Katie Macoretta, Niagara Region's manager of homelessness, housing and hostels, said prior to the committee meeting.



FOTOLIA

Niagara is one of 31 Canadian communities that participated in a nationwide homeless count April 5.

There were also people included in the count who volunteers were unable to approach for various reasons. In those instances, volunteers documented their observations and indicators of homelessness, such as someone sleeping on a park bench at 5 a.m. with their belongings at their side.

Based on preliminary analysis, about 20 of the 140 individuals are believed to be homeless, Macoretta said.

Acting commissioner of community services Adri-

enne Jugley said there are many reasons why people may be seen "out all hours of the night, not looking terribly focused or knowing where they're going."

"That doesn't mean they're homeless," she said.

The count is intended to provide a snapshot into the number of people who are homeless in Niagara on any given day, but is also meant to shed light on the circumstances that led them there. This will help the Region to properly allocate resources

and create strategies to address local need, Jugley said.

"I think sometimes we make assumptions about what brings people to us and it's important to move beyond that and to have some hard data to tell us the story."

The count, which ended last Wednesday, broke down the count results into age groups, gender and by family structure, but further detail will not be available until deeper analysis is completed in the coming weeks.

The federal government, which defined many of the questions included in the survey, will be collecting and analyzing the data on a national level.

The Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness has asked all participating communities for their count data and Niagara has obliged, while maintaining privacy will be protected.

"They're going to do some in-depth analysis as well and we look forward to seeing what those results are and

what it can mean to our program," director of homelessness services Cathy Cousins said.

Jugley said the count results will create a benchmark Niagara can use going forward to determine whether improvements have been made and strategies have been effective. The Region funds outreach and prevention programs, shelters and transitional housing — all of which "hope to reduce the number, but not just manage it," she said.

"We need to try to do some things to get ahead of it and reduce the number of people who need those services. We can't do that unless we understand what's going on."

Putting resources into supports that are "more upstream" is necessary in order to help break the cycle of homelessness, Jugley said. She believes the count results can help to better direct resources to the appropriate areas.

"(We're) looking at prioritizing our funding and our strategies, recognizing that shelters are an essential element but also that there are other ways to address the need with the resources we have," she said. "There's not a bottomless bank account with funding available for this. We have to be thoughtful about where we address those limited resources."

There has been no indication whether results of the count will translate into additional government funding.

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I've been thinking about Christian Gossip

PASTOR MICHAEL MELEG
Faith and St. Peter's Lutheran
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Everybody gossips, right? No big deal? Gossip magazines, talk and entertainment shows, blogs, all the latest hottest and YouTube. It's everywhere you look on radio, TV, computer and phone. For some people it's a driving, intense, all-consuming habit, and because of our sinful human nature, it tempts everyone.

If it's not media gossip then it's going on at school, in the workplace and at church. Sadly, many Christians don't realize they're sinning when they hear it and do it. It is so prevalent in God's Word, one of the Ten Commandments all about preserving people's God-given good reputations. We must not give false testimony against our neighbour, which means we should fear and love God so we don't tell lies about our neighbour, betray him, slander him, or



FOTOLIA

Not only are we not to listen to or tell lies about our neighbour, but we are not to betray or slander him.

hurt his reputation.

Instead we must defend him, speak well of him, and explain everything in the kindest way (The eighth Commandment and explanation from Luther's Small Catechism — ninth in the Reformed way of counting them).

OK, it's a commandment of God, so what does He say we must and must not do? We all need to be admon-

ished to keep our ears and our mouths closed no matter how "juicy" the gossip, to refuse to listen to and spread gossip. Not only that, but to put the best construction or interpretation on everything we see and hear that doesn't seem good or holy.

Not only are we not to listen to or tell lies about our neighbour, but we are not to betray or slander him, which means we are not to tell

anyone his secrets (Proverbs 11:13; 26:19). Or say any bad things about him (Proverbs 4:11; see also Proverbs 26:20-28). We have the God-given right to do so (parents, teachers, government officials such as judges, lawyer and police, and others).

It doesn't matter if it is the truth or lies because it will hurt his or her reputation (and a good reputation is a gift of God [Proverbs 10:7; 22:1; Ecclesiastes 7:1]).

The other thing we forget in this commandment is its positive aspect. Its commandment that do good things. "Defend him, speak well of him, and explain everything in the kindest way."

If someone tells you gossip about someone else, then stop them. Tell them it's none of your business and you don't want to hear it.

Two parts of this are very important.

First we defend and help other Christians when they sin by bringing their sin and God's wrath to their attention.

This is the command of Jesus (see Matthew 18:15-17). We are to do this to him, but also, if he repents and amends his ways then you have gained your brother or sister back. If he refuses to hear him, then you must bring two or three others to witness to him that yes, indeed, he is sinning and in danger of God's eternal judgment if he does not repent and change his ways. If he still won't listen, then you may "tell it to the church" by going to your pastor whose responsibility it is to tell the church the Gospel to share people their sins and forgive them when they repent. And if he has sinned directly against you and asks for your forgiveness, then you gladly and truly forgive him from your heart (Ephesians 4:32).

Second, we love our neighbour as ourselves when we hide and cover up each other's faults, bearing one another's burdens of sin. For you see, love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things; and "love will cover a multitude of sins" (1 Corinthians 13:7 and 1 Peter 4:8). Simply put, if it's a secret sin and you know about it, help them realize their sin, repent, seek forgiveness in Christ, but don't tell anyone else. It is God's will that you keep your mouth shut.

Both of these parts are very important for us as Christians to do, without one the other. On the one hand, we cannot simply cover up sins and pretend we've never seen them. If we are able to help our neighbour in Christian love. And on the other hand, it's wrong to bring them to his attention and then go out and gossip about them.

God commands we both speak the law to our neighbour and keep his faults to ourselves. St. Paul puts both of these responsibilities together when he says, "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:1-2).

It takes wisdom and love to do both of these things and it is beautiful in the eyes of God.

A word of wisdom is like apples of gold in settings of silver. Like an earning of gold and an ornament of fine gold is a wise rebuker to an obedient ear. The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and his glory is to overlook a transgression." (Proverbs 25:11-12 and 19:11).

It is my sincere prayer that every Christian would take the Lord's Word to heart, take their sins seriously, repent of the sin of gossip (you can't do it all), and with the help of God, stop listening to it and spreading it around. For you see, God has commanded all this to bring us to true repentance and to forgive us. God is all about forgiveness in Christ, the death of Jesus on the cross).

God has designed all the Law to lead us to repentance so that we can receive God's love and joy. He shows us our sins and out of love and concern for their eternal salvation would have us show our brothers and sisters their sins. So all together in Christian unity we may find in Jesus Christ our Saviour a merciful and loving God.

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LOCAL NEWS

Detention centre getting full-body scanners

BILL SAWCHUK
Postmedia Network

Niagara Detention Centre will be among the first in the province to start using full-body scanners to crack down on contraband smuggling.

"We are hoping to get one before March of next year," said John Mengia, president of Ontario Public Service Employees Union Local 252. "I think there are meetings already scheduled for next week."

"It is something we are all looking forward to — from our provincial committee to the floor staff. It's going to help with security in the institution. It is a significant investment by the ministry. It is a step in the right direction."

Correctional Services Minister Yasir Naqvi announced two weeks ago the province will install scanners at 26 institutions at a cost of \$9.5 million, including maintenance over 10 years.

Eleven detention centres and jails including Niagara will be in the first wave. The second wave will be complete within two years.

Currently, corrections officers across the province use



Niagara Detention Centre in Thorold.

strip searches, a body-officer scanner chair that detects metal, as well as hand-held and walk-through metal detectors.

However, those methods can't always identify items that are non-metallic or hidden internally, Mengia said.

The most common way inmates get banned items into jail is by hiding them in their rectum. They call the practice "hooping."

"It's no secret there is an increase in violence and behaviour problems when offenders are under the influence of drugs or alcoholic home brews," Mengia said. "The scanners will deter that. It will detect non-metallic contraband."

"It's something we see more and more in our line of work. We have seen offenders bring ceramic knives into the institution internally. The new technology will also detect the drugs that offenders have concealed internally. Nothing is 100 per cent, but it is as close as they can get."

The move follows a six-month pilot project at Toronto South Detention Cen-

tre, Naqvi said. During that project, 16,427 scans were done, and the scanners found 86 items, with ceramic blades, pills, marijuana and other contraband.

The union and politicians such as Niagara Falls NDP MP Wayne Gates have been saying Ontario's correctional facilities are understaffed and overcrowded to the point that it is jeopardizing guard and inmate safety.

Niagara Detention Centre was built in the 1970s in Thorold for about 125 inmates. In the 1990s, the centre went to double capacity and had to be cells to house up to 250 prisoners and has often held more in the years since.

"Our big issue right now at the Niagara Detention Centre is our staffing complements," Mengia said. "They are very low. You worry about the situation becoming volatile when you can't run programs for the offenders and they are locked up instead of going outside for their mandatory fresh air or regular visits and regular programming. All that is affected and reduced and the tensions increase."

bsawchuk@postmedia.com

Region needs a math lesson

I am starting to think Niagara Region needs to invest in a math tutor.

It seems the Region has a great deal of difficulty with numbers. And by difficulty, I mean that on a Monday, the Region might think 2+2=4 and then on Tuesday will tell you 2+2 actually equals 400. Then when you ask how they managed to produce such an enormous sum, regional staff will tell you there were some unexpected problems in the calculation.

Once again, the Region has reported major infrastructure projects are costing more than originally estimated. The water treatment plants at Decew Falls and Welland will cost an additional \$395,500 and \$442,841 respectively to complete.



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Neither of these cases is on the level of a Burgoyne Bridge financial disaster, but it does share some features in common.

Just like the bridge, the water treatment plants have exceeded projected costs due to unforeseen problems. However unlike the bridge, the water treatment plant projects remain within their budget.

And that is where things seem to get a little weird. I know accounting is the most boring thing in the known

universe, but stay with me because you need to hear this.

We should admit at the outset that budgets for big infrastructure projects — the Decew plant is budgeted at \$9 million, and the Welland plant at \$26.6 million — are designed to account for the possibility of unexpected or unforeseen circumstances.

This is just prudent. As Donald Rumsfeld once said, in any endeavour you will face known knowns, known unknowns and unknown unknowns. Those last ones, the unknown unknowns, can be a real pain in the backside, not to mention the wallet.

Still, those skilled at producing project budgets using best practices and experience, can set a budget that can accommodate possible

unknowns without breaking the bank.

Unless, it seems, we're talking about Niagara Region.

What kind of unforeseen issues were the planners at the Region expecting, that they needed to build in a budget cushion large enough to accommodate nearly half a million dollars in cost overruns?

I know staffers can look good if they come under budget, but that seems particularly excessive.

Niagara Falls councillor Bart Maves put it well when he said if you estimate a project will cost \$10 million, you don't then set a budget of \$30 million.

This ongoing arithmetic problem should be top of mind for regional coun-

cillors who now face the task of hiring a new chief administrative officer. That person will set the tone and direction for these sorts of projects for years to come.

Clearly, Niagara needs someone who can manage them, assist regional staff in planning them, and ensure cost projections will be accurate.

At this point, hiring someone for political reasons — someone without the depth of experience and skill-set to turn Niagara's infrastructure ship around — would be a failure of truly epic proportions.

Regional bylaws apparently need some work, too. Although regional staff have to report cost overruns to council, the rules don't require them to do that

before the money is spent.

Since cost overruns on major projects can significantly impact the regional budget, councillors should at the very least be informed as the project dynamics change.

These water plants are not completed, so all things being equal, we shouldn't hear any more about costs rising. But infrastructure spending isn't going to stop.

Upgrading and repairing aging infrastructure is a major issue these days across Canada. Like most other communities, Niagara still has lots of work left to do.

It just should be able to do it in a more efficient fashion.

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LOCAL NEWS

Meal Exchange run 'like a family'

LAURA BARTON
Postmedia Network

Administrators of a Niagara Facebook-run food pantry know what it's like to be unable to put food on the table.

Meal Exchange/Relief Program Niagara was started by Welland Korean Rye in 2014, with the goal of feeding families in need across the region. She used to be part of another group that did something similar, but branched out on her own.

"I would make cooked meals, fall-course meals, and then when I would offer it on another free group," she said, from the basement of her home where runs her pantry. She said when the other admin no longer wanted food to be a part of that group, she decided to start her own.

"Eventually, people started asking for groceries, help like that."

Along with her friend Anna Kowalsky-Campbell, they started working out ways to fundraise.

The program works in a few different ways. People can donate food, money or gift cards to purchase food that Korean and her other admins can add to their pantries. It



Laura Barton / Postmedia Network

The Meal Exchange/Relief Program Niagara was started on Facebook by Koren Rye, middle, in 2014 to help families in need of meals. With the help of her husband Jason Rye and Shawna Houlden, Jessie Perry, Kim Shook and Anna Kowalsky-Campbell, the Facebook group has grown dramatically and helps feed many families in Niagara.

will is used when people in need take groceries.

People are also welcome to donate gently used items, which then are used as part of the program's auctions where a donated item goes up for bid, and instead of bidding

money people bid quantities of food that get added to the pantries.

Jason Rye, Koren's husband, helps out by inspecting the items to make sure they're useable.

People have been very will-

ing to donate to the cause. Newer admin Kim Shook, who runs her pantry out of Thorold, said she has had people bring "totes and totes of stuff" to her house.

That's one of the tricky parts, though. Each person

who has a pantry runs it out of their own home, so it's hard to say who to expect will come up to the door.

Jason said it used to feel strange, but now he's pretty used to it.

"I used to be like, 'Somebody's walking down my driveway ...' Now I'm like, 'Hey! Hi, how's doing? You need a hand?'" he said, laughing.

Another challenge Korean and her team face is dealing with people trying to cheat them.

"We do have advantages, and we catch them," she said, adding she and the admins of similar Facebook groups chat with each other. "There are people that are double-dipping triple-dipping."

The group's description notes requests shouldn't be

made during the first and last weeks of the month, because of government assistance cheques coming in during that time, Korean said while they won't refuse the

requests, they keep a close eye out for people who consistently ask for help around that time.

Kowalsky-Campbell called it a "trust until it's abused" situation.

Korean isn't shy about confronting people who aren't being fair, either. She said government assistance first.

"We're not just a group," said Jessie Perry, Korean's sister. "I think we're more like a family."

"I know what it's like to have nothing."

Perry was able to contribute to the group last Christmas by holding a turkey draw. To win, people had to donate a stock item for children.

"We were able to fill 135 stockings," Korean said proudly. "I think all the group members have adopted a family and helped put food on their table for the holidays."

"People should know that they should never feel embarrassed to ask for help, because at one point everyone is in that spot," Perry said.



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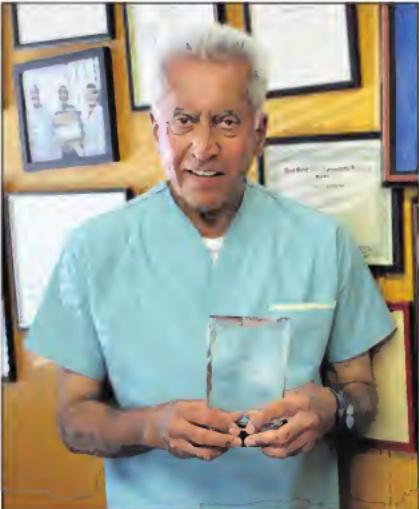
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ALLAN BENNER/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Welland family physician Dr. Pran Kundu holds an award naming him as the Niagara Region's physician of the year, an honour that has left him humbled.

Kundi named Niagara's family doctor of the year

ALLAN BENNER
Postmedia Network

Knowing he is helping his community is enough of an award for Dr. Pran Kundu.

The Welland family doctor has organized a medical conference at Foyer Richelieu that has run for 18 years, contributing \$215,000 to the care of the long-term care home in that time – including the \$12,000 raised at last December's event.

"We are very fortunate that we are contributing to the cause of the elderly," he said.

Kundi, who has worked with other local physicians to organize the fund-raising initiative, hopes to continue adding to the total in years to come, with the next medical conference planned for Dec. 7 this year.

He said he'd eventually like to establish a similar initiative to help children in the community too.

Meanwhile, Kundu has spent more than 40 years working as a dedicated family physician in the community.

And recently, his commitment to his community – both as a physician and a philanthropist – earned him some unexpected recognition.

He was recently notified by the Ontario Medical Association that he's the recipient of the Glassman Service Award in recognition of his service to his community as well as the medical profession, after being nominated by members of the Niagara South Medical Society.

As well, the Ontario College of Family Physicians recently named Kundu as the Family Physician of the Year for the Niagara Region.

"This came as a surprise to me because there are very, very capable people in the community," he said.

The honour, he added, "is more than I deserve."

The college presents seven such awards to family physicians from across Ontario every year.

The last time a Niagara doctor received the honour was when Dr. Jeff Remington was presented with the award in 2013, according to the College's website.

"It's very humbling. There are physicians I know who are exceptionally caring kind people. Maybe I just happened to know all the good ones," he said.

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College to build teaching distillery

You could say it's a college determined not to stand "still" in fermentation science.

To that spirit, Niagara College — home to the country's first commercial teaching winery and teaching brewery, at its Canadian food and wine institute — is adding another specialty to its menu.

In another first for Canada, it is creating an artisan liquor distilling program, to launch in September 2017.

The one-year undergraduate certificate program will feature hands-on training and classroom work in practical distilling, its science, analysis and management.

A new 2,000-square-foot on-campus teaching distillery, worth about \$1 million, is also part of the package.

The distillery will become part of the existing wine visitor and education centre at the Niagara-on-the-Lake campus, with construction to begin this summer and likely

be complete by year's end.

Craig Youdale, dean of the Niagara College Canadian Food and Wine Institute, said the program will start with a standard September to April school year.

"As we move along and the industry grows, we might be able to increase it somewhere down the road, like we did with our brewmaster program," he said.

Youdale said the program expansion is tying into the rise in craft distilling and responded to provincial legislation changes that are smoothing the way for small-batch distilling.

"We know there's a lot of anticipation about the growth of this industry," Youdale said. "It is a natural extension of the brewing and winemaking programs."

"This is a next phase of growth, maybe not as massive and overwhelming as we've seen in the craft brewing industry, but I think you're going to see a significant growth of artisan distill-



JULIE JOCSEN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK
Craig Youdale, dean of the Niagara College Canadian Food and Wine Institute, looks forward to a new teaching distillery that will open in 2017 at the Niagara-on-the-Lake campus.

ing in the next few years."

"There's a lot of anticipation," he said. "And we want to be ahead of the curve."

The program has been in the works for about two years, and is supported by a number of distillers, including Beamsville's Dillon's Small Batch Distillers.

It is aimed to people with an interest in distillation and who have already completed an Ontario diploma or degree — in particular those with a background in sciences and in programs such as culinary and wine and beer.

The program will also be a

pathway for existing students from the college's master brewer and brewery operations management, wine and viticulture technician, and culinary innovation and food technology programs.

It will also prepare brewmaster students for certificate and diploma programs

offered by the Institute of Brewing and Distilling International.

In its first year, 20 students will be accepted in a program open for admissions next February.

• • •

Niagara Catholic District School Board capped its Catholic Education Week with its annual Distinguished Alumni Celebration.

Nine recipients were recognized during a recent luncheon, including a family doctor and doctor of music, entrepreneur, philanthropist, a priest, a lawyer, a wine-maker and a professional-athlete-turned-educator.

The honoured include Rob Robbins, Lydia Tomek, Joseph Pillitteri, Father Jim Mulligan, Hector Pothier, Dr. Jennifer Frendo, Christina Le Rose, Anthony Lacavera and Catherine Lacavera.

Don Fraser's Chalkboard Niagara education column runs weekly for tips and releases e-mail him at donfraser@postmedia.com.

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Dorothy Rungeling cuts 105th birthday cake

WAYNE CAMPBELL

Special to Postmedia Network
Dorothy Rungeling is gliding

along at 105.

Pelham's aviation celebrity and most senior author cele-

brated her birthday last Thursday during a luncheon with friends at Lookout Ridge Retirement Community.

"I'm doing fine," she said in an interview, but while adding, "My eyesight is gone, hearing is gone and I can't write because

of my hand."

She still hopes to do some writing.

"I do miss it. There are stories I would like to finish about places around Fenwick."

In her 90s, she started writing books about her life as "the

Flying Housewife" in the 1950s, about growing up in Pelham and about her adoptive mother, poet Ethelwyn Werber.

At the same time, she sought younger seniors in her condominium building how to use computers.

Rungeling received the Order of Canada in 2003 for her contributions to aviation as a female racing pilot, instructor, commercial operator and writer for magazines and newspapers.

She was the first Canadian woman to hold a commercial sport licence, the first to solo a helicopter, earned numerous air race trophies and was awarded the Amelia Earhart Medal.

The airport in south Pelham she once managed, now bears

her name.

The airport commission decided it Niagara Central Dorothy Rungeling Airport last fall. Airports named after female pilots are rare.

Rungeling continues to encourage women pilots as a life member of the Ninety-Nines, an international women's aviation association.

Throughout the day gifts, flowers and greetings flowed into Lookout Ridge for her.

"I needed help to get it all up to my room," she said last Friday morning.

She planned to play *The Old Grey Mare* on her harmonica at the retirement community's evening dinner last Thursday.

"If I still have the energy, that

"is" said the onetime member of a country band.

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Costs driven up for treatment plant projects

MARYANNE FIRTH

Postmedia Network

Niagara Region will dig deeper into its well of money to pay for upgrades to the Decew Falls and Welland water treatment plants.

Work on both multimillion-dollar projects has exceeded construction contract amounts.

Region staff went before the public works committee last Tuesday asking that additional spending be approved.

Paul Smeitzer, director of water and wastewater services, stressed the Decew and Welland projects are still within their respective \$9-million and \$26.6-million budgets initially set by the Region.

Both have, however, exceeded their construction contracts that total \$7.7 million for Decew and \$22 million for Welland, as well as their contingency funds.

As a result, staff were asking for an additional \$395,500 for contract work at Decew and \$442,841 for Welland.

After construction began on the Decew and Welland facilities, built in 1925 and 1923 respectively, "significant" unforeseen issues were found that needed to be addressed, Smeitzer said.

Contingency funds were used to tackle the additional costs, but more funding is still needed, he added.

"We have exceeded the project award, but are within the project budget."

Public works chairman and Niagara Falls Coun. Bart Maves said the issue is the fee way deferred to staff to move between the contracted amount and initial budgeted cost.

A project could initially be estimated at \$30 million and then a bid selected at \$10 million, he

said. "That doesn't mean it's OK to go up to \$30 million."

Staff must come back to council for a vote of confidence or change for projects that exceed \$2 million. But the related bylaw is not written in a way that requires approval prior to money being spent, said Helen Chamberlain, director of financial management and planning.

Approval could also be granted afterward.

That will change moving forward with a new financial management system now in place at the Region, she said. It will limit spending to the contract amount until approval is granted.

Smeitzer said all the additional work required at Decew has been completed, despite not yet having council's approval for the extra spending. The extra work in Welland has not yet taken place.

Continued on next page

Propagation Ban and Sampling of Plants Susceptible to Plum Pox Virus

Between May and October 2016, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) will be inspecting selected rural and residential properties in the Niagara Region, to sample susceptible trees for the Plum Pox Virus and/or to verify compliance with the propagation ban that is in place. This means that property owners may see CFIA inspectors on their property.

The Niagara Region is currently under federal quarantine. Regulations are in place to prevent the spread of plum pox virus outside of the quarantine area. Plum Pox Virus is a serious plant disease that threatens Canada's stone fruit industry. It does not affect human or animal health.

Plants that are susceptible to the virus include apricot, nectarine, peach and plum trees, and some ornamental shrubs such as purpleleaf sandcherry.

A ban on propagation is in place. This ban prohibits anyone in the Niagara quarantine area from producing trees and plants that are susceptible to the virus. This includes producing trees and plants from seed, cuttings, grafting or any other method.

For a listing of the regulated plants and more information about the regulated area, please contact the CFIA at:

905-938-5060 or www.inspection.gc.ca



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Work on the expansion of the Niagara Region water treatment plant on Welland's Merritt Island is shown in this November 2014 photo.

Costs driven up for treatment plant projects

From previous page

St. Catharines Coun. Andy Petrowski raised concern that money had already been spent before council was able to have a say.

He also grew frustrated as he spoke about the near \$3 million in change orders the two projects stacked up.

Fort Erie Mayor Wayne Redekop noted his discomfort with the way the project update was being presented.

"It might be more helpful if the information came in a more timely fashion," he said.

He felt the process wasn't open and transparent, as it was coming to council "after the fact."

Both projects required some redesign to accommodate issues that were encountered, which increased construction and engineering costs, Smeltzer said.

The Decew project, which includes a building addition and filter rehabilitation, ran into facility infrastructure and site challenges related to safety and construction, including mechanical and chemical equipment upgrades, in-field piping modifications and roadway reconstruction to accommodate heavy single truck traffic.

The Welland project had issues with operational improvements and site chal-

lenges related to alignment changes to a valve chamber, new LED lighting, new reservoir dewatering and flushing system improvements, backwash piping modifications to improve efficiencies, improved safety access, backfilling and structural modifications.

St. Catharines Coun. Brian Heit felt any add-ons to the projects should have immediately come back to council for approval before any work was completed.

Councillors are the "watchdogs" for these large-scale public works.

"I don't want to be told after the fact that the money has been spent. Transparency is letting us know when something's going to happen, not telling us after the fact and then saying we're transparent."

The additional spends were ultimately approved by committee, Thursday council sought ratification.

The Decew project, awarded to Base-line Constructors Inc., is nearly complete, with only minor cleanup work left.

The Welland project, awarded to Romag Construction Ltd., is expected to be finished by the end of October.

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SUPPLIED PHOTO

Brock University professor David Fennell, who recently launched the International Institute for Animal Ethics.

Brock prof forms animal ethics institute

JOHN LAW
Postmedia Network

A Brock University professor has co-founded a new group devoted to education and advocacy of animal ethics.

The first-of-its-kind International Institute for Animal Ethics will look at how "moral knowledge and best practice" can prompt change in the treatment of animals in tourism, primarily.

Fennell, who has been with Brock for eight years, says when animals are reduced to "objects of commerce," their suffering, poor welfare and lack of respect becomes acceptable. His group aims to provide insight and guidance for both sides of the divisive issue.

It's an idea he pondered years ago as part of his tourism management curriculum. Teaching both eco-tourism and animal ethics classes, he has the most recent spillover in the animal side of things lately. Anger over captivity at Marineland in Niagara Falls and the treatment of animals at the Bowmanville Zoo have sparked several recent protests among Ontario animal activists.

"The students get so mobilized over the tourism and animal ethics," he says. "It's fine for people to treat each other poorly, but when people start treating animals poorly, it flips a switch."

Fennell says the group takes "no specific position" on any park or attraction. Rather, it's meant to "educate the public, students and the tourism industry about the proper handling and welfare requirements of animals."

Fennell formed the Institute with Marloes Van de Goor, a Dutch entrepreneur who also works in the field.

The group aims to develop an "interdisciplinary network" of scholars and professionals to research tourism and animal ethics, teach online courses for the general public, and consult with regulatory bodies like the World Tourism Organization to prompt "significant policy change" around the world regarding the use of animals in tourism.

The Institute holds its first major conference June 1 to 3 in Brock.

"For me to sit behind my desk and publish that looks impressive, and have a hundred or 200 or 500 people read them is just not enough any more," says Fennell. "Really, there has to be an application to the research that I'm doing."

He hopes the group can clarify common ground between tourism operators and people who want animals gone from all attractions. The middle ground is "animal welfare" — improving conditions as needed.

"We can't go to completely not using animals right now," he stressed. "We can't go from using them and abusing them to not using them at all. What is the intermediary position? That would be an animal welfare perspective."

"Let's acknowledge that we have to use animals, and will continue to use animals for things like tourism. But how can we go about it in a much different way?"

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Ontario NDP Leader Andrea Horwath and Niagara Falls MPP Wayne Gates, from in front St. Catharines hospital, address what they are calling a crisis in Ontario health care.

Health care a silent crisis in Niagara, NDP leader says

BILL SAWCHUK
Postmedia Network

For patients in Niagara, the

waiting is the hardest part, Ontario NDP Leader Andrea Horwath said.

Emergency room wait times for patients with complex conditions at St. Catharines hospital are more than double the government's own targets, she said.

"It's in St. Catharines the hospital is serving this community well," Horwath said at a news conference last Thursday across the street from the Niagara Health System site.

"We know that once people actually get in, they get good care, but the people and families that come here continue to wait far too long in the emergency room. It takes up to 17½ hours for most patients with complex conditions to leave the emergency room. That's more than twice the provincial target of eight hours."

Across the entire Niagara, Hamilton, Halton and Brant area, 93 patients are waiting in emergency rooms every morning for an in-patient bed, she said. It is the highest number in the province.

The NDP leader places the blame on Kathleen Wynne's Liberal government.

"No matter who you are or where you live, or how much money you make, your health and the health of your family comes first," she said.

"It should come first for the government, too. Today the Liberals are forcing our hospitals to make decisions based on dollars and deficits, not on what's best for patients."

She said there is a "silent crisis" in health care in the province because hospital budgets face rising costs while not enough money is being provided in funding.

Horwath said the province was responsible for the loss of 1,440 nursing positions in less than two years.

Continued on next page

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LOCAL

Health care a silent crisis in Niagara, NDP leader says

From previous page

"The responsibility lies solely with the premiers of this province," she said. "I think and agree we have seen the Wayne government make bad decisions and make problems worse. In this province for four straight years, hospital budgets have been frozen even as costs continue to rise."

"Once again in 2016, base funding for hospitals will not keep up with the growing needs or our growing province."

"Patients and front-line health-care workers know what it means to cut 1,440 nurses in the past 16 months."

Niagara has escaped those nursing cuts, Horwath added later, but she called on the Liberal government to provide Ontario's hospitals with stable, predictable funding, at a minimum that keeps up with inflation each and every year.

Niagara Falls MPP Wayne Giesbrecht, at times St. Catharines hospital are a direct result of a reduction in health-care services across Niagara.

"You have closed the Fort Erie hospital, you have taken services out of the Niagara Falls hospital and put them here (in St. Catharines)," he said. "You have closed beds in the Niagara Falls hospital."

"So where do you put people when you don't have beds? When you do that, we then continue to grow. People are coming into emergency rooms late."

waiting for days for a bed."

The Liberals took issue with Horwath's comments. "NDP MPP Eric Horwath is serious about investing in health care then she should have supported the 2016 budget where we increased health-care funding by \$1 billion," said Liberal MPP Eric Hoskins in an e-mail.

"That's a 2.1 per cent increase this year — greater than the rate of inflation," the health minister said.

The Liberals said more nurses are working in Ontario this year than last year, citing a report by the independent College of Nurses of Ontario.

An NHS spokesperson said wait times in its emergency departments and urgent care centres vary for a variety of reasons.

The sickest patients are always seen first, even though they may arrive after other patients.

The NHS also said it is one of the few hospital systems that publicly posts emergency department wait times in real time, so patients make informed decisions.

In addition, it is introducing new models of care beginning with those who have congestive heart failure and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

The model has been proven to reduce visits to the hospital that could be more appropriately provided in the community, a spokesman said.

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LOCAL NEWS

Brock faculty founder remembers a charmed journey

DON FRASER
Postmedia Network

It was 1964, Spain was in the throes of its dictator Francisco Franco.

Juan Fernandez had enough of the stifling repression in his country.

Something world was soon up for the young Madrid professor.

Wheels were set in motion for Fernandez to become one of seven founding members of an tiny start-up in St. Catharines called Brock University.

There, he would stay to teach for decades, as Brock ballooned into a Niagara institution with an international reach.

Fernandez himself had grown up in a Spanish village near the Pyrenees. For a time, his family went into hiding in the mountains during the Spanish Civil War.

As an adult, he became a lawyer in Madrid — the city where he met his wife Hortensia.

In another career turn, he began teaching Spanish at a University of Maryland campus in Spain in the early 1960s. His students were U.S. troops and their dependents studying Spanish.

"This is how I started getting spoiled with the North American way of life," Fernandez said with a laugh, inside his south St. Catharines home. And so, he and his fiancee took action.

In 1964, Fernandez placed an ad seeking employment in a Canadian Association of University Teachers magazine.

"They made me pay \$1 for it," Fernandez, 85, recalls with a smile. "And later I received a postcard proposal from Brock. I didn't even know who they were."

Mere weeks after that, he'd left his home in Madrid and flew to Toronto alone — an unfamiliar territory "that was like being on the moon for me."

"But it was amazing to be there," he said. "Someone was

at the airport with a sign that said 'Brock University'."

"And the first thing the immigration officer told me is 'there's no such thing as a university in St. Catharines.' He corrected me."

Fernandez made his way to a rented home on Søyen Drive in the Garden City. Brock classes started in September, and he began teaching Spanish "practically immediately."

"We thought at the time, 'now, we are actually doing a very serious thing. We are beginning a university,'" he said of a group that.

It was the headlong start of a teaching career that saw him rise in director of the Romance Language department in what's now Brock's Hispanic and Latin American Studies program.

Those first 127 Brock students studied in what were hardly classic classrooms. At first, they were jammed into the basement of St. Paul Street United Church (now Silver Stole).

By October, the school moved to "Glenmore Campus" in a former refrigeration factory on Lockhart Drive below the Niagara Escarpment.

Within two years, operations and classes had moved atop the Escarpment to the new Decew campus and its permanent home.

Meanwhile, Hortensia was still in Spain and unable to leave the country unless she was married.

Part of the solution — as recounted in local articles — was to get hitched by proxy. Juan had his marriage at St. Catherine of Alexandria in St. Catharines, and Hortensia became his legal bride in a Jan. 9 ceremony in her Spanish parish church.

"I was spared a lot of the nervousness most bridegrooms fear," said Fernandez in a May 19, 1984 Niagara Falls Review article after his wedding. Hortensia joined him May the next year from Madrid.

"Oh yes, it was funny, you went to the church and did the whole ceremony, but there was no groom," Hortensia recalled 50 years later, or the beginning to a lasting marriage that produced two sons, John and Jose.

Early academic years through the turn of the 1970s were collegiate ones the couple describe as "very familial" with Brock's first president the late James Gibson overseeing a small academic family.

Continued on Page 21



JULIE JOSCAN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Juan Fernandez is one of the seven founders of Brock University. He is photographed with his wife Hortensia Fernandez.

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LOCAL NEWS

Brock faculty founder remembers a charmed journey

From Page 19

"One day I saw Dr. Gibson riding to the university on his bicycle in shorts," said Hortensis with a laugh. "It was a shock for me — Spain was much more conservative than that."

Gatherings with conversation and meals — one a Spanish paella cooked by Hortensis — were often held at faculty members' houses.

In the early years, there was a bond among them all.

This was an energetic team working to put their school on the map. And of the original faculty, Fernandez said he believes he's the one of only two who are still alive.

"The first couple of years for us was all new and exciting, we were very enthusiastic," he said, of a Brock of that ended with his retirement in 1996. "The first year I spent \$10,000 on Spanish books. I had never had the ability to spend so much money."

His runs through several anecdotes from the 1970s and 1980s. One was the stress left by American draft dodgers from the Vietnam War who became students.

Otherwise, "there were no bad memories," he said.

"The classes were (sometimes presented) as a kind of a game, which the students appreciated very much. It was relaxing."

Over the years, Brock became even more of a family affair, with a number of extended Fernandez family studying and graduating from the university.

It was also where an enduring friendship began with Robert Galero, one of Fernandez' earliest students.

"I was very privileged, because he is a natural teacher," said Galero, who lives in St. Catharines and has taught high school there. "For Juan, teaching was an art, not a science, and he was the kind of person that would bring people into the department."

Brock was so fortunate in having a man like that... liberal minded, very affable, so easy to talk to, fair and courteous with his students.

"Juan has been the brother I never had, and more than a mentor," he said. "We've all watched each others' children

grow."

Their mutual connection to Brock was reignited in October 2014, when Galero, now 70, was at a Brock convocation for his honours BA in art history.

"I asked the dean if Juan could do the honours on stage," he said.

"They got him up there and put the hood on me that day. It was a special moment, it was very symbolic."



Supplied photo of Juan Fernandez teaching one of Brock's earliest classes.

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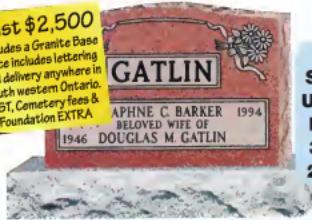
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Marineland files lawsuit against teen filmmaker

From Page 23

Marineland believes *Black Water*, with a title alluding to the hugely successful documentary *Blackfish*, will "secure income for animal activist organizations and, as such, is for a commercial purpose."

Reached last Thursday, Affolter said Marineland is not directly mentioned in the film, and the faces of all visitors and employees have been blurred out. He rejects the park's claim it is a commercial purpose.

"*Black Water* is meant as an educational, non-commercial film that dives into the moral question behind keeping cetaceans (dolphins and other whales) in captivity," he said via e-mail. "The film is a narrative set in Kiska's perspective that

explores what these sentient, social creatures might feel when placed in a captive environment."

The film will no longer be released May 20, but Affolter still intends to release it "at the right time."

He intends to defend himself against the lawsuit, though he can't "afford legal protection."

"It's sad that we live in a world where people are bullied and pushed aside just for speaking their mind."

It marks the ninth lawsuit Marineland has launched in the past four years.

Niagara Falls animal activist Mike Garret, who is being sued by the park for \$1.5 million, calls it "disgracing" the park would use Ontario's court system to sue a teenaged marine biology student bringing atten-

tion to Kiska, Canada's only captive killer whale.

"What's next, will they sue an eight-year-old girl who writes a poem about captive belugas?" he says. "I think this is part of a wider legal strategy Marineland is attempting to employ where they are trying to keep any video or photos taken inside the park under their copyright control, and prevent the public from seeing anything that could damage them."

In 2013, the park sued Garret for \$1 million in general damages and \$500,000 in punitive damages after a series of protests. It is still unresolved.

Contacted last Thursday, Marineland issued a statement saying Kiska is "healthy and extremely well cared for," and was recently

inspected by independent investigators.

While the park "encourages our guests to take as many personal photos as they wish," it asserts its intellectual property being used for a "propaganda film."

"Like every private person or business in Canada, Marineland objects to the unlicensed and illegal theft of its images to make money."

"Marineland does not object to the fair expression of opinion by anyone and fully supports free speech. Marineland does not support illegal and/or defamatory conduct."

Marineland opens for its 55th season on May 21.

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LOCAL NEWS

Firefighter's home destroyed by blaze

ALLAN BENNER
Postmedia Network

Carl Chambers was surrounded by the ashes of almost everything he owned, searching through the ruins for anything he could find.

People are often thankful after fires for the items they were able to recover, he said as he looked through the blackened debris last Sunday morning.

But at first — judging by the extent of the damage — he doubted he'd be able to retrieve any of his cherished keepsakes he collected throughout his life.

Chambers was in his backyard at about 6 p.m. last Saturday working on his garden when he heard the smoke alarm ringing within the house, he said, running for about two years.

He ran inside to find flames in his living room.

"I put the fire out with two fire extinguishers," he said. "But I guess by that time it was inside the walls."

Wainfleet fire Chief Harry Flagg was nearby on Station Street, and said he arrived at the home at 11558 Highway 3 within minutes of receiving the call.

But already, he could tell the fire would not be easily extinguished.



ALLAN BENNER/Postmedia Network

Carl Chambers looks through old photographs recovered after his home was destroyed by a fire in Wainfleet Saturday.

"It was puffing black smoke already," Flagg said, adding the fire quickly spread from the walls to the attic.

Volunteers from throughout Wainfleet arrived on the scene. Flagg, and other firefighters from a team of five firefighters from Port Colborne also responded with a tanker truck.

"But it was going pretty

good by the time everyone got here," Flagg said.

Chambers has been a volunteer firefighter in Wainfleet for about one year, working to save the lives and property of his neighbours. "I did my best efforts," he said of his colleagues — he was unable to save his own home.

"I put my gear on and tried

to help," he said, adding he felt as though his efforts were of little use against the fire that tore through the building.

It burned for more than an hour until almost nothing remained.

Chambers as well as his animals, including two German shepherds, made it through the blaze relatively

unscathed.

Friends have offered him accommodations until he can make arrangements with his insurance company.

But last Sunday, he was once again surrounded by items that were irreparable.

Chambers was a corporal with the British Army, stationed in Iraq, Bosnia, Kos-

ovo and Ireland during the 16 years he served with the military.

He had medals from each of those conflicts, as well as a framed letter from Queen Elizabeth, thanking him for his service.

"It's all in there," he said, gesturing towards the blackened ruins of his home.

But his own keepsakes weren't as important to him as those that had belonged to his grandfather.

His grandfather, Sgt. Tug Wilson, defended England in the Second World War, and Chambers kept his medals he earned alongside his own.

"That's what I care about most," he said.

Eventually as he sifted through the wreckage with the help of a few friends from the fire department, items started emerging from the ashes.

Among them, a steel chest filled with newspaper clippings and other items, photographs taken during his years with the British Army, and one or six medals that belonged to his grandfather.

He sat among the wreckage, thoughtfully looking through the keepsakes he'd recovered from the fire.

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